

Serial No.: 09/683,380
Attorney Docket No.: F-441

Patent

Amendment To The Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) A system of incoming mail receptacles for detecting hazards in a mail piece comprising:

a plurality of incoming mail receptacles each including a contaminant detection hazard detector, a communications system, and a source detection system for providing suspect source information when a hazard is detected; and

a server connected to the plurality of incoming mail receptacles for receiving suspect source data and communicating the suspect source data to the incoming mail receptacles, wherein the suspect source data is determined using the suspect source information.

2. (previously presented) The system of claim 1 further comprising:

a secure network connection between each incoming mail receptacle and the server.

3. (previously presented) The system of claim 1 further comprising: an image scanner for scanning the face of a mail piece.

4. (currently amended) A method for coordinated hazard detection in a mail system having a plurality of incoming mail receptacles with hazard detection systems connected to a central server comprising:

detecting the presence of a mail piece;

detecting source information relating to the mail piece;

testing the mail piece for hazards to determine an initial mail piece quarantine condition; and

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alerting the central server upon detection of a hazard and providing source information to the central server, wherein the source information is associated with the detection of the initial mail piece quarantine condition.

5. (previously presented) The method of claim 4 wherein the source detection includes detecting a meter serial number.
6. (previously presented) The method of claim 4 wherein the source detection includes detecting a return address.
7. (previously presented) The method of claim 4 wherein the source detection includes detecting a handwriting sample.
8. (previously presented) The method of claim 4 further comprising:
providing hazard information to the central server.
9. (previously presented) The method of claim 4 further comprising:
alerting a response team to the hazard condition.
10. (previously presented) The method of claim 4 further comprising:
sealing the incoming mail receptacle if a hazard is detected.
11. (previously presented) The method of claim 4 further comprising:
redistributing the source information from the server to at least one incoming mail receptacle.
12. (previously presented) The method of claim 4 further comprising:
distributing source exclusion information from the server to at least one incoming mail receptacle based upon the source information received at the server.

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13. (previously presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the source information comprises a meter number.

14. (previously presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the source information comprises a scan image.

15. (previously presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the source information comprises OCR data.

16. (previously presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the source information comprises a handwriting signature.

17. (previously presented) The system of claim 1 wherein the contamination detector hazard detector comprises:

a segregated incoming mail air sampler for collecting an air sample having an incoming mail opening and a lockable door for the opening;

a mail piece transport system for feeding the mail piece through the sampler;

a movable surface for applying force to an edge of the mail piece to form a pillow deformation in the mail piece;

a flattener for flattening the pillow deformation to collect the air sample;

a hazard detector to test the air sample and for providing a hazard indication;

and

a transport mechanism for moving the mail piece from the air sampler into a collection chamber if no hazard is detected.

18. (New) The method of claim 4 wherein the source detection includes detecting at least one fingerprint.

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19. (New) An incoming mail receptacle for detecting hazards in a mail piece comprising:

- a contaminant detection hazard detector;
- a fingerprint enhancing substance dispenser for dispensing a fingerprint enhancing substance for use in detecting fingerprints if a hazard is detected; and
- a fingerprint scanning system for scanning fingerprints on the mail piece if a hazard is detected.

20. (New) The mail receptacle of claim 19 wherein the fingerprint enhancing substance includes crazy glue fumes.